

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 10, 2011
NR #11-1

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PEOPLE OF COLOR HIT HARDEST BY HIV/AIDS INFECTIONS

SAN BERNARDINO. An estimated 56,300 Americans are newly infected with HIV (the Human Immunodeficiency Virus that causes AIDS) each year, and 1.1 million Americans live with HIV/AIDS. It is estimated that 21 percent of HIV-positive people don't know they are infected and many did not know they were at risk of contracting the virus.

People of color continue to be at a disproportionate risk for HIV infection. Nearly half of all new infections, 45 percent, were among African Americans, who account for only 12 percent of the U.S. population. Hispanic Americans account for 17 percent of new infections, but only comprise about 15 percent of the U.S. population.

According to the County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health 2009 Morbidity Report, African Americans and Hispanic Americans account for just over half of the County's population and outnumber any other ethnic group impacted by HIV. Together, they account for approximately six out of 10 of those reported to be living with HIV/AIDS.

"It is important to remember that HIV is transmitted primarily by unprotected sexual behavior and sharing needles for drug use," said Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare, Health Officer, San Bernardino County Department of Public Health. "Testing is key to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care."

HIV/AIDS now ranks as the third leading cause of death for African Americans and fifth leading cause of death for male and female Hispanic Americans, ages 35 to 44. "Early detection is extremely important for linking people who are HIV positive to medical care, reducing the mortality rate and greatly improving quality of life," noted Dr. Ohikhuare.

Rapid and Standard HIV Antibody testing is available through the AIDS program at the San Bernardino County Public Health Clinic located at 799 East Rialto Avenue in the city of San Bernardino. Testing is offered on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Standard HIV Antibody testing is offered by appointment. To make an appointment, call (800) 722-4777.

For more information about HIV/AIDS and testing, call the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health AIDS program at (800) 255-6560, or visit the website at www.sbcounty.gov/pubhlth.

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Chief Executive Officer

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